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Immigration Cinema in the New Europe, by Isolina Ballesteros, Bristol, Intellect, 2015, 270pp., £30 (pbk), ISBN: 9781783204113.

As its title suggests, Isolina Ballesteros's book addresses images of immigration in European cinema, with a particular focus on films released between 1985 and 2011, especially those produced in the UK, France, Spain and Germany. Ballesteros establishes in her introduction the theoretical framework upon which she builds her argument, discussing the notion of Fortress Europe and the tensions deriving from 'double belonging' to the sovereign national states and to the European project. Departing from conceiving Europe as a family of "racial and ethnic purity" (p.4), contemporary notions of Europe are founded on the hybridity derived from the multi-state configuration. Yet, the family trope still pervades, requiring foreign immigrants to assimilate into "the social and political structure of the nation as well as the progressive annihilation of their native customs and practices" (p.4). Ballesteros discusses the appearance of xenophobic discourses, populism and the notion of "the immigration problem" (p.11) within Europe, before exploring the trends present in European cinema of the 2000s: the "cinema of duty", "accented cinema", "intercultural cinema", "polyglossia", "migrant/minority/diasporic cinema" and "hegemonic cinema on immigration" (pp.13-14). The book does not distinguish between films made by white European filmmakers or by diasporic/immigrant directors. It does focus, however, on themes of *otherness* and migration into Europe, as opposed to migration between European countries. Finally, Ballesteros questions whether "immigration cinema" constitutes a genre, with some films influenced by a documentary style seeking to inspire authenticity, and other films exploring comedic and tragi-comedic situations that emphasise notions of otherness.

After an introductory analysis of *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* (Rainer Werner Fassbinder, West Germany, 1974), Chapter 1 explores the figure of the immigrant in relation to race, mobile masculinities and class across *Las Cartas de Alou* (Montxo Armendáriz, Spain, 1990), *Brothers in Trouble* (Udayan Prasad, United Kingdom, 1996), *Saïd* (Llorenç Soler, Spain, 1998), *La faute à Voltaire* (Abdellatif Kechiche, France, 2001), *El traje* (Alberto Rodríguez, Spain, 2002) and *Hop* (Dominique Standaert, Belgium, 2002). The chapter highlights trends of mobile masculinity, with male immigrant characters always on the move and masculinities defined by heterosexual romance and male friendships. Another key element in these films is the double image of race, which contrasts media images of the poor black immigrant with that of the successful black athlete.

Chapter 2, Female Transnational Migrations and Diasporas, focuses on five films: *Bhaji on the Beach* (Gurinder Chadha, United Kingdom, 1993), *J'ai pas sommeil* (Claire Denis, France, 1994), *Flores de otro mundo* (Iciar Bollain, Spain, 1999), *Inch'Allah Dimanche* (Yamina Benguigui, France/Algeria, 2001) and *Extranjeras* (Helena Taberna, Spain, 2002). The films in this section challenge stereotypes that frame the female immigrant as dependent, linked to narratives of family reunification, or in roles of domestic service or sexual work. Ballesteros selects films made by women filmmakers who incorporate a variety of voices and narratives outside this trend, bringing instead attention to female networks of support and notions of agency that move away from victimising discourses.

“Human Trafficking and the Global Sex Trade” includes an overview of the circumstances surrounding the global sex trade, a summary of the factors that contribute to sexual labour exploitation, and the composition of criminal networks. This third chapter analyses four fiction films: *Lilya 4-ever* (Lukas Moodysson, Sweden/Denmark

2003), *La sconosciuta* (Giuseppe Tornatore, Italy/France, 2006), *Transe* (Teresa Villaverde, Italy/Russia/France/Portugal, 2006) and *Eastern Promises* (David Cronenberg, UK/Canada/USA, 2007). All films focus on sex trafficking of Eastern European women, with a view to provide geographical and thematic consistency. Moreover, Ballesteros selects these films for their conscious desire to provide visibility to victims of sex trafficking. Some of these films follow media trends that fully victimise the protagonists as vulnerable, innocent and destined to perish, such as Cronenberg's and Moodysson's. Yet, a fifth film, Mimi Chakarova's documentary *The Price of Sex* (USA/UAE/Bulgaria/ Moldova/Turkey, 2011), provides an interesting 10-year immersive case study that avoids victimisation, acknowledges the victims' agency and reflects on the disparity between the crime and the punishment (pp.110-116).

Chapter 4 is entitled "Queer Immigration and Diasporas: Performative Identities, Cross-Dressing Displacement/Assimilation", and it includes analysis of three films: *J'ai pas sommeil* (Claire Denis, France/Germany/Switzerland, 1994), *Lola + Bilidikid* (Kutlug Ataman, Germany, 1999) and *Princesa* (Henrique Goldman, Italy/Spain/France/UK/Germany, 2001). The focus here is on issues of othering and intersectionality (race, gender, sex and sexuality), with identities in transition and performance also playing a central part in the argument. Indeed, Ballesteros offers a two-fold discussion of drag and performance, which on the one hand reinforce gender values, while on the other hand challenge and subvert gender (pp.124-125). Great part of the chapter engages with liminality and uses "in-betweeness" to assert resistance and transformation. In this context, 'drag performing' and 'transness' become a way to (de)construct otherness as well as to parody heteronormativity, ultimately rebelling against assimilation and reaffirming difference.

The fifth chapter approaches notions of family and European white-guilt on

seven films, including among others *La promesse* (Jean Pierre and Luc Dardenne, Belgium/France/Luxembourg/Tunisia, 1996), *Taxi* (Carlos Saura, Spain, 1996), *Caché* (Michael Haneke, France/Austria/Germany/Italy, 2005), *Le Havre* (Ari Kaurismäki, Finland/France/Germany, 2011) and *Terraferma* (Emanuele Crialesse, Italy/France, 2011). Expanding on historical background and political agendas, the chapter revisits some of the ideas from the introduction in order to inform her argument about white guilt and a desire for redemption. The chosen films advocate for a transformation of society within the nuclear family and across generations. These sympathetic narratives, however, contrast against the populist groups increasingly growing in European countries, which makes these representations appear utopian. Yet, Ballesteros argues that the resolution of generational conflicts in the films serves as “a transference of moral responsibility to Europe’s younger generations” (p.170) where the utopian can become a reality if the new generations embrace the change.

“Border-Crossing Road Movies: Inverted Odysseys and Roads to Dystopia” contextualises the European border, exploring journeys of migration and the ordeals that the immigrants go through prior to their arrival. Some films analysed are *In this World* (Michael Winterbottom, UK, 2002), *Eden à l'Ouest* (Costa-Gavras, France/Greece/Italy, 2009) or *14km* (Gerardo Olivares, Spain, 2007). The films here employ a documentary style that convey a criticism of closed borders by focusing on the hardship of the journey, the difficulties of entry, and the unethical networks profiting from illegal crossings. Closely related to the road trip movie, the borders in these films are not only geographical but also include social, political and cultural boundaries that keep the immigrant on the other side, even after reaching Europe. By doing so, the films defend “people’s rights to mobility while denouncing the double standard that defines the current function of borders in terms of binary dichotomies: crossing and closure, free

flow and stagnation, economic profitability and discrimination, corruption and legality” (p.199).

Finally, Chapter 7 discusses “Identities In-Between in Diasporic Cinema”. This is by far the longest chapter and it is organised in a slightly different fashion. Ballesteros notes that the number of European diasporic films is ever-growing and thus she limits the scope to three sections of the more established diasporic communities in Europe. The first section looks at Arabs in France/Beurs in the French Banlieue, and includes analysis of films like *La Haine* (Mathieu Kassovitz, France, 1995) or *L’esquive* (Abdellatif Kechiche, France, 2003). These films approach the “diasporic character’s interracial harmony”, yet also critique “French society’s deficiencies regarding its minorities’ social integration” (p.223). The next section is on South Asians in Britain and includes analysis of film adaptations such as *My Beautiful Laundrette* (Stephen Frears, UK, 1985), *East is East* (Damien O’Donnell, UK, 1999) and *Bend it like Beckham* (Gurinder Chadha, UK/Germany/USA, 2002). Ballesteros notes how the plurality of characters and themes within diasporic Asian representation reduces the “burden of representation” (p.228) and offers a plural portrayal, even if on occasions the comedic genre attracts stereotypes and caricatures. The generational conflicts and themes of interculturality portray a society where white British “will help command the future of an integrated England” and new generations of British-South Asians “will free themselves from obsolete patriarchal impositions” (p.232). The final section is on Turks in Germany, and explores films like *Gegen die Wand* (Fatih Akin, Germany/Turkey, 2004) and *Almanya: Willkommen in Deutschland* (Yasemin Samdereli, Germany, 2011). A discussion on Fatih Akin cover most of this section. Ballesteros notes that despite Akin’s reluctance to be considered a diasporic director, most of his films delve on notions of identity in transit or returns to the homeland, with female characters that

move away from the victimised female oppression of other Turkish-German films, a trend also shared by some female directors later analysed. Albeit this chapter provides the reader with many examples, it is probably less cohesive than previous chapters.

While a conclusion might have provided the reader with explicit connections between the different chapters, each can nonetheless stand alone in terms of having a coherent argument. *Immigration Cinema in the New Europe* pushes forward scholarship on the portrayal of immigration by including an extensive corpus and by applying intersectionality to explore common trends on the topic within the European context. It complements Yosefa Loshitzky's *Screening Strangers: Migration and Diaspora in Contemporary European Cinema* (2010) and Daniela Berghahn and Claudia Sternberg's edited book *European Cinema in Motion: Migrant Diasporic Film in Contemporary Europe* (2010), which engage more deeply with historical and political debates, while Ballesteros embraces social and cultural categories of analysis, including gender and sexuality. Ballesteros also charts similar territory to Berghahn's *Far-Flung Families in Film: The Diasporic Family in Contemporary European Cinema* (2013), but where Berghahn emphasises notions of family throughout, Ballesteros addresses a wider set of trends. Overall, this book covers a great selection of mostly Western European films –a limitation on its scope- with a focus on the categories of race, gender and sexuality. There is some imbalance regarding the chapters' organisation and number of films analysed, yet this might be a consequence of having adapted work from previous publications. Despite this, this book is a mandatory reference for those researching immigration and film in an European context.

Bibliography

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